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Author: Deborah Paredez
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INTRODUCTION

Selenidad and Latinidad in the 1990s

To get to the Selena Museum, you must leave the tourist district along Corpus Christi's bay front, traveling west on IH-35, or you can take the side streets, driving through town on Leopard Street, past the pawnshops, past the sign for Braslau's furniture that, when lit, reads "R S AU'S," past A & A Bail Bonds and Vick's Hamburger stand, past the Buccaneer Stadium, where on Friday nights crowds gather for local high school football games, past the racetrack, past the Ranch Motel and La Siesta Motel and Sunset Motel and Cactus Motel, past a billboard advertising Bud Light in Spanish, past the Diamond Eyes and Party Place Cabaret gentlemen's clubs, and just past the Greyhound RV Park on the right side of the street. If you're coming in from out of town, once you've crossed into the city limits, passing the oil refineries dotting the landscape, lit up and glimmering like the Emerald City at night or billowing smoke in the daylight hours, you must exit long before you see the ocean, veering onto Highway 358 from IH-35, quickly exiting and then turning left on Leopard Street, arriving finally at Q Productions, the recording studio owned by Selena's father and former manager and where Selena once recorded her award-winning albums. You almost miss the building, a low, boxy, industrial structure; almost miss the sign to the left of the side door indicating that this is indeed the Selena Museum, launched by her family in response to

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thousands of fans who visited the recording studio following her death (figure 2).

Once inside the rectangular room, after you've paid your one-dollar donation, you are immediately surrounded by the soft sounds of Selena's music piped in on the intercom system and by an eclectic range of memorabilia from Selena's life and career: the second-place spelling bee award Selena won in fifth grade, gold albums, Coca-Cola ad campaign photos, promotional movie posters for *Selena*, glass cases brimming with music awards, a copy of the Texas State Senate Resolution No. 619 honoring Selena. There is a roped-off area in which her red Porsche is parked. There are magazine covers, album covers, photos of Selena with other celebrities, her famed Fabergé egg collection, and letters from fans in Jamaica, Japan, Singapore, Malaysia, Spain, Cuba, New Zealand, and nearly every country in Central and South America. Selena's famous self-designed costumes are lined up throughout the room, adorning mannequins enclosed in glass cases.[1]

In the center of the room something sparkles. You can't miss it: the geometric cut, the deep color, the flared material aching for a twirl. Here it is in its violet resplendence, the mythic purple sequined pantsuit Selena designed and wore for her final concert in the Houston Astrodome (figure 3). In the year after her death the pantsuit toured with the Smithsonian traveling exhibit America's Smithsonian before returning to Selena's hometown. A miniature replica of the outfit adorned the Selena Barbie doll, sold frequently on eBay and more officially at the touring musical based on her life. Selena's purple-spangled pantsuit has assumed a life not unlike Elvis's flashy white pantsuit, that of iconic signifier, into which impersonators and other admirers aspire to fit.

On the afternoon I visit the Selena Museum a young Latina meanders across the room, singing along to "Como la Flor," pausing in front of one of the glass cases, pointing to a black leather bustier, interrupting her singing with, "Me gusta este, este de cuero [I like this one, this leather one]." Two other Latina visitors gather around the mannequin in the purple pantsuit. One tells the other, "This is my second time [here]. I really like this one a lot." They size up the mannequin. "Selena was little. She was so . . . skinny." The other responds, "Well . . . it's fit for the mannequin. She had big legs, but, you know, they don't make mannequins [like that] . . . . Look, they are kind of *huango* [loose] in the butt." They ask a young Latino who works in the museum, "What size was Selena? A size *five*?

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2. Sign posted outside the Selena Museum. Photo by Deborah Paredez.

3. Selena's Astrodome concert costume being prepared for museum display, Houston. Photo by Jeff Tinsley. Courtesy of the Smithsonian Institute.

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No! I thought she was at least a size seven or nine." The women remain suspicious as they continue to assess the official record of Selena's size.

When I approach the purple pantsuit I too am surprised by how small it looks, convinced as well that the costume has been recut to fit the mannequin. In my memory of her in that purple-spangled outfit undulating across the Astrodome stage, she seemed larger, at least larger than life, her generous rear end filling out the costume in inspiring ways. But as with many memories of Selena, my recollected image is surely a palimpsest. Is it Selena crooning her disco medley that I remember, or is it Jennifer Lopez as Selena discoing across the concert stage in the Warner Bros. biopic that pervades my memory?[2] My accretive memory suggests that the act of remembering Selena is inevitably imprinted by images taken from the phenomenon of Selena commemoration. To evoke Selena is to evoke her absence, to attend to the *huango* fit, the hollowed and hallowed spaces of her remains.

The observations about the huango fit of Selena's purple pantsuit reveal that despite its attempted alterations, Selena's proverbial measurements don't quite conform to the narrow curves of the standard-issue mannequin. . . . The outfit's misfit also signals the frequent misfit of official Selena commemorations that often fail to fill out the contours of Selena as she is remembered by legions of her Latina/o fans. And yet, in spite of the labored efforts to redraw the contours of her figure, the purple pantsuit with its huango inseam persists in casting the shadow of a different outline for Selena. As the Latina museum visitors observe, these huango folds serve as a visible reminder of the critical space created by Selena's absence. The gaping material in many ways acts as a metaphor for the creative processes of memory itself, whose imprecise fit invariably provides a capacious space for the production of new subjects or countermemories.

This book follows the lead of these observant Latina fans, focusing on that symbolic space between the mannequin's silhouette and the sagging or huango folds of the glittering purple material, on that space where memory, performance, and Latina/o identity gather. It is precisely these spaces opened up by the shell or sign of Selena, what I call Selenidad, that interest me. This book explores how a range of Latina/o communities, like the observant museum visitors, critically inhabited and interrogated the memorial terrain of Selenidad in efforts to measure and create new patterns for their own lives at the close of the twentieth century.

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Latin Boom, Latina Tomb

In May 1991 Louise Rosenfield Noun, an art collector and feminist historian from Des Moines, Iowa, decided to auction one of her most treasured paintings from her international collection of women's art. The painting, Frida Kahlo's *Self-Portrait with Loose Hair*, sold at Christie's in New York for $1.65 million, the most ever paid for a Latin American work. Following the record-breaking sale, economic forecasters announced that Latin American art had emerged as a solid investment.[3] Noun donated the proceeds to endow the Iowa Women's Archives at the University of Iowa, the same university that had trained Ana Mendieta, another Latina artist who, like Kahlo, had suffered a tragic and untimely death and was experiencing posthumous fame in art circles across the country. In the months before the auction another of Kahlo's self-portraits graced the sides of New York City buses, advertising the monumental exhibition Mexico: Splendors of Thirty Centuries at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. In the decade to follow, Fridamania, as the cultural and commercial iconization of Kahlo was often referred to in popular accounts, exploded across the United States with biographies, exhibitions, operas, plays, documentaries, a Volvo ad, a U.S. postage stamp, countless Frida-emblazoned tchotchkes, and a battle over the coveted role of the anguished artist in the Hollywood biopic.

As Salma Hayek wrestled the role of Frida from Jennifer Lopez and Madonna, other battles ensued in Hollywood over the casting of yet another dead Latina icon, Eva Duarte Perón, in Disney Studio's film adaptation of Andrew Lloyd Weber's 1979 musical, *Evita*. When, after much protest, Madonna secured the role and began promoting the film, fashion industries ranging from vintage boutiques to runway shows capitalized on Evita's famously glamorous Dior-clad and Ferragamo-heeled image. Just a few weeks before the $60 million film's Christmas Day premiere in 1996, Bloomingdale's launched Evita boutiques in their stores, stocked with well-tailored designer suits, shoes, faux furs, and other Evita-inspired accessories. Estée Lauder soon followed with "The Face of Evita," a new line of makeup and perfumes that offered the patrician hues and scents styled after the late Argentine icon.[4]

Evita was not the only dead Latina fashion icon summoned to generate revenue for the garment and cosmetics industries in the mid-1990s. For those consumers and style mavens on a limited budget, JCPenney and Sears began carrying the "Selena" collection, inspired by the slain

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Tejana (Texas Mexican) musical superstar and budding fashion designer, Selena Quintanilla Pérez. Before her tragic death at age twenty-three in March 1995, Selena had achieved international success as a Grammy-winning recording artist and had become known as the designer of her rhinestone-studded stage costumes. The line of "Selena" apparel, which was unveiled in 1997, targeted a junior market that composed a substantial portion of Selena's fan base and included sassy yet affordable items such as skirts with side slits, sheer tops, and flared pants modeled after Selena's image of working-class Latina glamour.[5]

Selena's funeral occurred in the same year that Frida Kahlo's 1942 *Self-Portrait with Monkey and Parrot* fetched $3.2 million at Sotheby's and the U.S.-based publisher Knopf purchased the rights to Argentina's best-selling novel, *Santa Evita*, a fictionalized account of the abduction of Evita's corpse.[6] During Selena's closed-casket wake on 2 April 1995 rumors began spreading that the whole affair was a publicity stunt, that she was not really dead. To dispel the rumors and to appease the nearly fifty thousand mourners who had descended upon Corpus Christi, Texas, to honor the slain superstar, Selena's family agreed to open her coffin, momentarily revealing her corpse during the final hour of the twelve-hour public visitation held at the Bayfront Convention Center. Those who reverently filed past the opened casket caught a glimpse of Selena's embalmed body dressed in the self-designed outfit she had worn to accept her six Tejano Music Awards earlier that month. One popular account of the scene described her "lips and long nails done in blood red" and her "slinky purple gown" (she wore a pantsuit and jacket that revealed little skin); another emphasized the "single long-stem red rose . . . placed in her crossed hands."[7] The event was so noteworthy that the multinational Spanish-language television network Univisión interrupted regular programming with live footage from this unveiling that Sunday afternoon. This episode of exposure eerily foreshadowed countless other episodes in which Selena's body would be made public after her death, as corporate forces, political figures, and Latina/o communities mourned her passing, prompting one journalist to proclaim, "The veneration of Selena is taking on a life of its own."[8]

This generative "(after)life of its own," or what I call Selenidad, proliferated across the United States at the close of the twentieth century. Not unlike Fridamania and Evita worship, Selenidad assumed numerous and wide-ranging forms that included documentaries, magazine tributes,

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monuments, murals, a Selena Barbie doll, websites, biographies, Selena look-alike contests, musicals, drag shows, a ballet, a display of one of her costumes at the Smithsonian, and, as with Frida and Evita, a well-publicized controversy over the casting of a Hollywood biopic in her honor. Jennifer Lopez was ultimately cast in the Warner Bros. film *Selena*, but not before the studio staged well-publicized auditions in Los Angeles, San Antonio, Miami, and Chicago that drew over ten thousand young women and girls from across the country.[9]

It appeared that many Americans were invested—emotionally, politically, and financially—in the posthumous lives of Selena, Evita, and Frida. Why did dead Latina icons figure so prominently in the 1990s? What ideas and struggles did these dead Latina figures embody, enable, or efface? What do we make of this . . . fascination with the tragically fallen Latina body?

Dead Latina bodies were frequently celebrated and sometimes reviled by a range of communities throughout the 1990s to facilitate emerging and often competing articulations of latinidad, or Latina/o identity. That is, the Latina tomb was regularly raided to promote, to contain, and often to capitalize on the cultural, economic, and political Latin Boom in the United States. The decade witnessed what is commonly referred to as a "Latin Explosion" in culture and commerce, when corporate marketing forces understood Latinos as categories of potential capital at the same time that a resurgence of nativist discourse and sweeping immigration reforms saw Latinos as a potential threat to national unity. Latinos themselves engaged in acts of self-fashioning often not accounted for by the state or by corporate tastemakers. Despite their differing investments in latinidad, all of these constituencies frequently evoked the same symbol to further their cause: Selena's death. In short, it was over Selena's dead body that the Latin Boom exploded. As Selena's public viewing evocatively foretells, her dead body was frequently publicized to delimit or to expand prevailing notions of citizenship, cultural identity formation, and collective memory at the close of the twentieth century. More than any other dead Latina icon, Selena's dead body repeatedly galvanized Latina/o efforts to mourn collective tragedies and to envision a brighter future, corporate attempts to corner the Latino market, and political jockeying for and public concerns about the Latino vote. As such, Selenidad provocatively illustrates the simultaneous recognition of and anxieties about Latinos as a growing political, economic, and cultural force in the nation during the 1990s.

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This book examines some of the ways that Selenidad provided blueprints for and often remapped the terrain of latinidad. My understanding of Selenidad as a contested, creative, and critical set of endeavors is indebted to scholarship in recent years that has revealed how acts of cultural memory and collective mourning can generate and transform concepts of national, racial, and gendered identities. This focus on the imaginative nature of memory often foregrounds the role of performance and popular culture in the transmission of national or cultural histories.[10] Understood as an act of creation as well as citation, memory functions much like performance, as Joseph Roach observes, "as both quotation and invention, an improvisation on borrowed themes, with claims on the future as well as the past."[11] That is, both memory and performance defy traditional notions of temporality by simultaneously repeating *and* revising cultural scripts or scenarios. Given their improvisatory and capacious nature, sites of cultural memory such as public commemorations commonly act as contested arenas wherein what Marita Sturken calls "narrative tangle[s]" form among competing claims to a shared past, present, and future.[12] This book takes part in these efforts to explore the inventive powers and political contours of memory and mourning by examining the entangled narratives about latinidad, citizenship, and gendered and sexual identities that cross over Selenidad.

Some critics see only obsessive, often racialized hagiography in Selenidad, while others bemoan it as the prime example of the commodification of Latino culture.[13] To be sure, tracking Selenidad invariably involves following the trails of fan cultures and commodifying structures, but these forces alone cannot account for Selena's robust afterlife. To borrow a phrase from Gilbert Rodman in his work on Elvis's afterlife, I am interested in explaining Selenidad, rather than in explaining it *away* as simply the result of inevitable commodification or pathological Latino melancholia.[14] Selenidad operates in ways akin to what Raymond Williams refers to as a "structure of feeling," or a critical and affective social practice in process, that supports multiple and variant constructions of latinidad.[15] In fact, as the following chapters illustrate, Selenidad reveals important insights about the ways that assumptions about Latino consumption and mourning practices are positioned against normative standards for civic and national citizenship.

It is not uncommon for a singular figure, event, or image to emerge as a flashpoint for the constellation and transformation of cultural or

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national memory (think, for instance, of Stonewall, *Jet* magazine's photographs of Emmet Till, Elvis, or the planes careening into the Twin Towers). These memory circuits are charged by and in turn animate a range of collective memories.[16] Memory circuits provide complex pathways through which currents of past histories often run alongside or intersect with currents that pulse with claims to the present and hopes for the future. Selenidad acts as one such memory circuit. Dead bodies of famous figures often operate as such circuits, or what Roach calls surrogates for the transmission of collective memory or cultural continuity among communities of the living.[17] The tragically fallen, once beautiful, dead female body has its own particular cultural function, as Elisabeth Bronfen notes: "The death of a beautiful woman emerges as the requirement for a preservation of existing cultural norms and values . . . . Over her dead body, cultural norms are reconfigured or secured."[18] Throughout the 1990s dead Latinas, Selena in particular, were frequently pressed into service by a range of communities in efforts to claim or to contest the political, cultural, or economic force of latinidad. What made Selena more readily activated and frequently deployed than other dead Latinas?

Ironically the aspects of Selena that distinguish her from figures such as Frida and Evita are the very ones that seem to make her an unlikely candidate for such widespread iconization.[19] Unlike Frida and Evita, Selena was a U.S.-born Latina who grew up speaking English in a family that had lived in Texas for several generations. Although advertising executives and political parties rarely acknowledge this distinction in their homogenizing formulations of latinidad, U.S. entertainment industries—before Selena—historically ignored U.S.-born Latinas in favor of the exotic appeal of foreign-born Latin stars in the manufacturing of such cultural icons as Dolores del Rio and Carmen Miranda.[20] Selena was also affiliated with an explicitly Latina working-class style; she wasn't deployed to sell Volvos or Dior suits. She shared Evita's humble roots, but unlike the Argentine first lady she continued to promote a working-class aesthetic and allegiance after achieving fame through her fashion and her decision to continue living in the neighborhood where she was raised. This working-class aesthetic was undeniably linked to the contours and complexion of Selena's own body; she was brown, unquestionably curvy, and had black hair that hadn't been lightened—no securely held blond chignon or understated accessories were fastened to tone down her color. (Although Frida shared Selena's dark-haired

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and brown-skinned features, Frida's style was more frequently equated with an exotic, artistic sensibility and with the romanticized notions of revolutionary Mexico than with contemporary U.S. Latina/o culture.) Selena's age also set her apart from the others. All three women faced untimely deaths, but Selena was a particularly young woman who was clearly at the beginning of her career when she died at age twenty-three. Her status as a figure who had just begun to cross into the limelight thus resonated powerfully for Latina/o communities yearning to express a collective promise for their own future.

Selena lived, died, and was quickly canonized during the 1990s, unlike the others, who were unearthed and rediscovered years after their deaths. She was a product of and ultimately helped shape the decade. And while one could argue that all three women performed distinctive public personas, Selena was the only one who was a performer by profession. Moreover, Selena gained popularity in a musical performance form (Tejano music) that was often ignored or, at best, derided by mainstream and even many Latino communities. And yet despite the fact that all of these distinguishing traits—dark, working-class, Tejano music singer—are frequently devalued and even reviled in many communities across the nation, Selena emerged as a widely revered icon among diverse constituencies with a range of sometimes conflicting agendas. It is precisely this conundrum—how and why this unlikely young pop star became a seemingly ubiquitous cultural icon—that interests me. In the following pages I explore how Selenidad animated a range of charged, interconnected circuits, from political attempts to manage the emerging population categorized as Latinos to corporate manufacturing of Latinos as a marketing demographic, from the makings of U.S. Latina/o cultural memory to the inter- and intra-Latina/o conflicts and coalitions that arise along lines of gender, sexuality, race, and region.

The performative context from which Selena emerged and ultimately took part in reimagining is the dynamic tradition of Tejano music, which, unlike most of the Latino musical styles popularized in the recent Latin Music Boom, originated within the borders of the United States. As the ethnomusicologist Manuel Peña notes in his history of Tejano music, Texas Mexicans have distinguished themselves from other Mexican American communities of the Southwest by their "strongly innovative musical spirit."[21] Tejanos were the principal innovators in a range of musical styles, including the *corrido* (border ballads), *conjunto*

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(working-class dance hall music), and *orquesta* (orchestral ensembles patterned after American swing bands). Historically Tejano music has been derided by Mexicans as "too Americanized," by Anglo-Americans and other Latino communities as "too Mexican," and by nearly all as rural, working-class music. In truth Tejano music exemplifies the best of border cultural production by providing a historically resilient and innovative space wherein Tejanos have (re)fashioned an identity that transcends the bipolar categorizations of "Mexican" or "American." Within the themes and rhythms of Tejano music one can trace the legacy of occupations and negotiations over power that have marked south Texas; Mexican *rancheras* and Latin American *cumbias* collide with German polkas and mainstream U.S. country, pop, and hip-hop, often all within the same song. Tejano music thus reveals the deeply creative ways that Texas Mexicans have adapted to and often challenged the pressures that bore upon them as the result of a history of economic and political disenfranchisement in the state.

Selena mastered traditional Tejano musical conventions with a repertoire that included Spanish-language mariachi ballads, English-language pop love songs, and code-switching cumbias.[22] Like other young musicians throughout the 1980s, Selena, who grew up in the working-class neighborhood of Molina in Corpus Christi, transformed Tejano music largely as a result of her urban upbringing and her exposure to rock 'n' roll, African American funk, Caribbean reggae, Colombian cumbia, and Anglo-American pop music.[23] But unlike other young Tejano musicians of her generation, Selena reinvented the male-dominated genre. . . . During her early years of touring as a teenager Selena quickly gained a reputation for the combination of her deep resonant voice, adroit dance moves, charismatic stage presence, and sexually suggestive, self-designed costumes. Her stage persona was unusual for artists in the history of Tejano music. The dominance of male performers and record label owners and the common recurrence of misogynist themes found in the lyrics of Tejano music contributed to the dearth or, at best, devaluation of female participation.[24] Selena's profound economic success, bold costumes, deft choreography, and powerful vocal skills marked a significant intervention within the masculinist space of Tejano music. That is, she represented and ultimately redefined Texas-Mexico border culture, while simultaneously succeeding in crossing over a range of aesthetic, cultural, and national borders.

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Selena also displayed wide-ranging talents and actively participated in the creation of her image in her second career as a clothing designer.[25] It was well known among her fans that she performed in outfits of her own design, characterized by their sexual suggestiveness; she would often combine low-cut, sequin-studded bustiers with midriff-baring, tight-fitting, flared-cut pants. These costumes led many mainstream chroniclers to (mis)label her the "Tex-Mex Madonna," when in fact Selena's style was more reflective of a decidedly working-class Tejana self-fashioning than an uninspired attempt to copy Madonna's style.[26] After years of designing costumes for herself and her band, Selena launched her own clothing line in 1993 and opened a small chain of boutiques, Selena, Etc., in 1994. This act served to bolster her status as a working woman, and more particularly as a young Latina actively striving to assert symbolic and material independence from the patriarchal confines of her family and larger cultural forces as well. Her entrepreneurial efforts in the realm of self-fashioning also clearly set the prototype for the "star as brand" phenomenon that has emerged with artists such as Beyoncé and Jennifer Lopez.

In addition to her status as a sexy young woman, Selena was regarded as a barrio-girl-next-door, long before Jennifer Lopez's incarnation as "Jenny from the block." She was often referred to as *la reina del pueblo* (the queen of the people) or *la gran muchacha del barrio Molina* (the best girl of the barrio), due in large part to the fact that even after achieving fame and fortune she continued to live next door to her parents' home in Molina with her husband, the guitarist Chris Pérez, whom she married in 1992. Her working-class persona did not result simply from the fact that she continued to reside near her family in the barrio, but from her savvy self-fashioning. In interviews she often discussed her love of fast food or her shopping excursions to Payless Shoes, a discount franchise frequented by and often located within working-class communities. She thereby gained a reputation as a genuine, wholesome, barrio girl "who never lost touch with her roots."[27] Selena resonated with audiences not only in terms of a shared class and regional history, but in terms of color: her brown skin and unbleached black hair provided a rare and affirming representation of frequently devalued *morena* (dark) traits in a world where most Latin/a American celebrities conformed to Anglo-American standards of beauty in hair color and body shape. Selena's promotion and self-fashioning as the Tejana-in-touch-with-her-roots

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and the well-worn good girl/tempting siren dialectic that circumscribed her career invariably highlight the demands of authenticity placed on minoritarian communities. . . . Through her constant efforts at self-fashioning she navigated both the roots (the authenticity demands) and the routes (good daughter/dangerous woman) through which her story was regularly channeled.[28]

In some ways, as a working-class musical performer from somewhere down South who exuded a sexual charisma onstage and set up home close to her roots, Selena resembles that other dead American icon, Elvis Presley. Both performers continue to enjoy a vibrant afterlife, underscoring the ways that performers act as repositories of cultural fantasies and mediums through which collective histories, anxieties, and aspirations are expressed and refashioned.[29] Frequent comparisons to Elvis proliferated following Selena's death, with one critic summarily reducing her to "a new, darker-complected Elvis."[30] While this dismissive quip ignores the historical and gendered specificities of Selenidad, it does provoke questions about the racializing work that Selena does. What does it mean to be a "new, darker-complected Elvis"? What do Selena's performances and the memorial performances in her honor *reveal* about racial understandings in the United States that Elvis's performances and his ensuing iconization in particular sought to *conceal*? Because Selena died before she dyed her hair the dark roots of U.S. popular culture show through in Selena commemoration in ways that are often strategically effaced in most Elvis worship.[31] Selena and her subsequent phenomenon opened up a space for the representation of working-class, brown women and made visible traditionally ignored Latina/o histories and the ongoing Latina/o presence within U.S. cultural, political, and economic spheres. Selenidad thus illuminates, and at times actually inaugurated, the connections between cultural memory and the shifting categories of racial and gendered identifications at the dawn of the twenty-first century.

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Notes

Introduction

1 Field notes from visits conducted in January 2001 and December 2005.
2 For more on Jennifer Lopez as Selena, see Negrón-Muntaner, "Jennifer's Butt"; Aparicio, "Jennifer as Selena."
3 This fact is especially impressive given that more than a third of the works up for auction at Christie's failed to meet their minimums. Belejack and Plagens, "Frida on Our Minds"; "Iowa Gets $1.5-million from Sale of Painting," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 29 May 1991, A2.
4 S. Miller, "Selling Evita to the Masses," 92.
5 Ellen Bernstein, "The Selena Look," *Corpus Christi Caller-Times*, 20 November 1997; Mary Gottschalk, "Selena Lives On in Clothing Line," *Houston Chronicle*, 25 June 1998, Fashion sec., 1; Lisa Lenoir, "A Dash of Spice: Selena Legacy Hits High Note in Clothing Line," *Chicago Sun-Times*, 20 May 1998, 29.
6 Nathan, "Travels with Evita"; Judd Tully, "'Self-portrait' Sets Kahlo Record," *Washington Post*, 18 May 1995, C6.
7 Hewitt, Harmes, and Stewart, "Before Her Time," 49; Armando Villafranca, "Second Tragedy Stuns Corpus Christi; Selena Buried with Red Rose in Her Hands," *Houston Chronicle*, 4 April 1995, A1.
8 Patoski, "The Queen Is Dead," 110.
9 "Hoping for Stardom: 3,000 Selena Look-Alikes Turn Out for Casting Call," *Phoenix Gazette*, 18 March 1996, A2; "Wanted: Actress for Selena Role," *Houston Chronicle*, 8 March 1996, 1; Elena De la Cruz, "En busca de Selena," *La Opinión*, 15 March 1996, 1D; Lydia Martin, "2,000 Try Out to Play Slain Tejano Singer," *Miami Herald*, 18 March 1996, A1.
10 See Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, on the ways memory is "sedimented" in bodily practices; Lipsitz, *Time Passages*, on the role of popular culture in the making of collective memory; Roach, *Cities of the Dead*, on the links between

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performance and memory; Sturken, *Tangled Memories*, on cultural memory and national identity.

11 Roach, *Cities of the Dead*, 33.

12 Sturken, *Tangled Memories*, 3, 44.

13 One of the first scholarly treatments of Selena to appear in print was "Santa Selena" written by the Latin/o American scholar Ilan Stavans. Stavans offers a cursory and cavalier analysis of the process of Selena's iconization wherein he reinscribes the border as a racialized site of pathologized fans who uncritically worship Selena as "a patron saint." For astute explorations of Selena and the commercialization of Latino culture, see Coronado, "Selena's Good Buy"; Jim Mendiola, "Selena and Me," *Frontera Magazine*, http://www.fronteramag.com/issue5/Selena/index.htm.

14 Rodman, *Elvis after Elvis*, 19.

15 Raymond Williams defines structure of feeling as "the specifically affective elements of consciousness and relationships: not feeling against thought, but thought as felt and feeling as thought." Like performance and memory, a structure of feeling is ultimately, as Williams observes, "a social experience which is still *in process.*" *Marxism and Literature*, 132, emphasis in original.

16 Following Foucault, Marita Sturken refers to these charged circuits as "technologies of memory" (*Tangled Memories*, 9, 258). David L. Eng and David Kazanjian understand these symbols of loss as melancholic objects capable of expressing multiple losses at once and thus possessing "a certain palimpsestlike quality" ("Introduction: Mourning Remains," 5). Eng and Kazanjian seek to de-pathologize Freudian notions of melancholia, and instead understand it as "a continuous engagement with loss and its remains [that] generates sites for memory and history, for the rewriting of the past as well as the reimagining of the future" (4). For more on the role of melancholia as a generative identificatory and activist mechanism for queer communities of color, see Muñoz, *Disidentifications*, 57–74.

17 Roach writes, "Celebrity, performing in constitutional office even in death, holds open a space in collective memory while the process of surrogation nominates and eventually crowns successors" (*Cities of the Dead*, 76). Sharon Holland also writes about the "serviceability" of dead bodies in nationalist projects and among marginalized communities within the nation struggling to articulate emergent subjectivities (*Raising the Dead*, 9). Holland writes, "The ability of the emerging nation to speak hinges on its correct use of the 'dead' in the service of its creation. Here the dead are the most intimate 'enemy' of the changing and growing nation. Should they rise and speak for themselves, the state would lose all right to their borrowed and/or stolen language" (28). Her work also explores the ways that "embracing the subjectivity of death allows marginalized peoples to speak about the unspoken—to name the places *within* and *without* their cultural milieu" (4–5).

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18 Bronfen, *Over Her Dead Body.*

19 For an analysis of Frida's emergence as an icon in the United States, see Molina Guzmán and Valdivia, "Brain, Brow, Booty." For analyses of Evita's afterlife, see Diaz, "Making the Myth of *Evita Perón*"; Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire*, 133–60.

20 Several Latina/o scholars have addressed the cultural significances of female "Latin" stars such as Dolores del Rio, Lupe Velez, and Carmen Miranda. See Beltrán, "The First 'Latin Invasion'"; López, "Are All Latins from Manhattan?"; Baez, "From Hollywood and Back"; Rodriguez, *Latin Looks* and *Heroes*, *Lovers*, *and Others*; Sandoval-Sanchez, *José Can You See*?, 21–61.

21 Peña, Música *Tejana*, 14.

22 For more on Selena's biography, see Patoski, *Selena*; Vargas, "Bidi Bidi Bom Bom."

23 During the 1980s the term "Tejano" emerged as a distinct and recognized subgenre in the recording industry. Deborah Vargas notes that Tejano music was transformed and embraced by what she refers to as a "unique 'Tejano generation' located somewhere between the post-Chicano civil rights era and the emerging pan-Hispanic identity formation of the mid-1980s" ("*Cruzando Frontejas*," 226).

24 As Deborah Vargas documents, several remarkably talented and resilient female performers managed to achieve recognition and sustain careers within the male-dominated and machismo-saturated Tejano music industry. These Tejana artists included Lydia Mendoza, Ventura Alonzo, Rita Vidaurri, Eva Garza, Chelo Silva, Beatriz Llamas, Rosita Fernandez, Laura Canales, Patsy Torres, Eva Ybarra, Elsa García, and Shelly Lares. Vargas's dissertation, "*Las Tracaleras*," constructs a long-overdue genealogy of these female performers in the history of Tejano music.

25 My analysis of Selena's star text is informed by Richard Dyer's landmark studies of celebrity. See *Stars* (London: British Film Institute, 1979) and *Heavenly Bodies: Film Stars and Society* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986).

26 See Willis and Gonzalez, "Reconceptualizing Gender," 9–16.

27 Johnny Canales, quoted in Rick Mitchell, "Selena," *Houston Chronicle*, 21 May 1995, Magazine sec., 6. It is important to note that the narratives that exalted Selena's wholesome family values often elided the fact that she was a Jehovah's Witness. This elision undoubtedly corresponds to the fact that one's status as a Jehovah's Witness does not fit easily within dominant constructions of Latina/o authenticity.

28 This double-edged sexuality discourse is nothing new in the historical representations of women of color. While Selena's biographer, Joe Nick Patoski, interprets Selena's complex persona within the confines of the virgin/whore or good-girl-from-the-barrio/hypersexy-international-superstar dialectic, several scholars have attempted more nuanced

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analyses. Notably, Emma Pérez posits that Selena represented "decolonial desire" by affirming a Chicana feminist sexuality (*The Decolonial Imaginary*, 102). José E. Limón argues that Selena's "good girl narrative" ultimately served to control the "dark possibilities" of her sexualized image (*American Encounters*, 183).

29 Joseph Roach argues, "Performers are routinely pressed into service as effigies, their bodies alternately adored and despised but always offered up on the altar of surrogacy . . . . [An effigy is] a cultural trend in which the body of an actor serves as a medium … in the secular rituals through which a modernized society communicates with its past" (*Cities of the Dead*, 39–40, 78). In a similar fashion, Gilbert Rodman, borrowing from Stuart Hall, describes Elvis as a "point of articulation," or a specific cultural site "that serves as the major conduit by which two or more *other* phenomena come to be articulated to one another" (*Elvis after Elvis*, 27).

30 Stavans, "Santa Selena," 181.

31 For a discussion of the ways that Elvis worship produces whiteness by effacing the African American sources of Elvis's music and style, see Roach, *Cities of the Dead*; Lott, "All the King's Men," 192–227.

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